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Man in custody after 7-Eleven clerk doused in lighter fluid

Hostage situation.

Woman suffers minor injuries, sent to hospital as a precaution



PHYLICIA TORREVILLAS

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A 37-year-old man is in custody after taking a female employee hostage, dousing her with lighter fluid, and threatening to light her on fire Wednesday at a 7-Eleven in downtown Vancouver.

VPD spokesperson Const. Brian Montague said that at around 11:30 a.m., the man walked into the store in the 1200 block of Granville Street with a knife and poured lighter fluid on the clerk.

"He then barricaded himself inside the store as police began to attend the area and contain it," he added.

Negotiators and members

of the emergency-response team spoke to the man, who eventually released the hostage and surrendered shortly after.

The woman suffered minor injuries and was sent to hospital as a precaution.

"It's still early on in the investigation, but there does appear to be a relationship between the two," Montague said, adding the man was not known to police.

VPD officers also disabled surveillance cameras in the store.

"In any situation like this that happens quickly ... in the utmost of caution we will presume that there are others involved," Montague said. "The members would have taken out cameras to avoid anyone else that may have been in the store seeing (officers) enter."

The incident briefly shut down Granville Street Bridge and closed off Granville Street between Drake and Davie streets.



Vancouver police officers stand outside a 7-Eleven in the 1200 block of Granville Street on Wednesday following a hostage situation that began at around 11:30 a.m. A woman suffered minor injuries and one man was taken into custody. PHYLICIA TORREVILLAS/METRO

Gender bender

A Swedish toy catalogue causes a stir with dolls for boys and guns for girls

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PAGE 28



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Budget. 2% Van property tax hike proposed

The proposed 2013 city budget will raise property taxes two per cent to provide a whack of new services for Vancouverites if council approves it next week.

While Vancouver has the third-lowest tax rate for homeowners of all municipalities in Metro Vancouver, the average homeowner still pays more than the Metro average.

Police could get \$2 million for a community safety program that will put 40 unarmed officers on the ground. The program hopes to speed response times and improve community safety by having these officers respond to property crime, parking complaints and quality-of-life issues.

If passed, millions of dollars will be dedicated to affordable housing (\$9.6 million), parks (\$14.4 million) and bike- and pedestrian-route safety improvements (\$11.8 million).

Fire and rescue services could also get an extra \$700,000. Arts, cultural and social grants will receive an extra \$300,000.

And for \$1 million, downtown could get high-tech, solar-powered trash-compacting dumpsters that hold more than twice as much waste and notify garbage collectors when they're full.

The tax increase is in line with inflation, according to the 177-page proposed budget.

But the consumer price index from October 2011 to October 2012 was just 0.7 per cent, said Jordan Bateman of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation.

The budget also includes performance metrics, including the number of tickets paid, litter-bin cleanups per day, community gardens and fire response times.

EMILY JACKSON/METRO



Former Vancouver Olympic organizing committee president and CEO John Furlong, left, reads a statement responding to allegations of abuse as his lawyer Marvin Storrow listens during a news conference in Vancouver on Sept. 27. DARRYL DYCK/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Lawsuit reveals claims of more abuse allegations

War of words. John Furlong is fighting abuse allegations with lawsuit, while Georgia Straight reporter vows she will countersue



KATE WEBB
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More of John Furlong's former students at a Burns Lake Catholic school have allegedly come forward with claims of abuse at the hands of the former Olympic organizer, according to an email written by a Georgia Straight journalist — words Furlong's lawyers insist are defamatory.

The email was revealed in a defamation suit Furlong filed against Laura Robinson and the editors and publishers of the Georgia Straight on Tuesday.

"Since the Sept. 27 article many, many more former students of Mr. Furlong's have contacted the Georgia Straight and myself wanting to give statements about very serious abuse and racist behaviour," journalist Laura Robinson wrote in a Nov. 8 email to Chris Dornan of Own the Podium, a non-profit of which Furlong is chair.

"Non-Native students have given statements confirming Mr. Furlong's abuse.... There is a great deal of confirmation that Mr. Furlong was violent and a racist."

Furlong is seeking a permanent injunction to prevent further allegations from being spread. The 14-page lawsuit filed by Furlong's crack legal team reiterates his vehement denial of all claims of physical abuse, mental abuse and racism that were published in a two-page story in the weekly Vancouver paper.

The lawsuit says the story has thrust the executive chair

of the Vancouver Whitecaps FC into the centre of a public scandal, and that he has "suffered, and will continue to suffer, grave damage to his character and reputation."

He is suing Robinson and the Straight for general, special, aggravated and punitive damages, legal costs, an apology and a full retraction. The suit also seeks to force the publishers to take all possible measures to erase all traces of the story from the Internet.

The notice of claim notes Furlong's lawyers were aware of the Straight's intent to publish the story before it ran, and were sent eight sworn affidavits by his former students in May.

Robinson also filed a report with the RCMP before the story ran. The lawsuit says Georgia Straight editor Charlie Smith was advised in August that there were inconsistencies between Robinson's account and that of one of the former students named in the

story.

Furlong stated after the story broke in September that "The Georgia Straight newspaper did not place a single call to me to validate any of the elements of this story." Robinson's story noted Furlong's denial of all claims, and she has said all her interview requests through his lawyer and book publisher were denied.

A call and email to the Georgia Straight seeking comment were not immediately returned, but Robinson has said she will countersue Furlong for making defamatory statements about her research and ethics.

Metro contacted Furlong's office earlier this week and was told by an assistant that neither Furlong nor his lawyer had any further comment as the matter was before the courts.

An RCMP investigation into the claims of physical abuse dating back to the late '60s is ongoing.

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1 NEWS

City helping crack down on methadone fraudsters

Sting. Drug often used for coping with opiate and heroin addiction being abused by pharmacists giving users kickbacks



EMILY JACKSON
emily.jackson@metronews.ca

Undercover operations to catch methadone fraudsters are underway at pharmacies across the Lower Mainland, city council heard Wednesday.

Eleven stings are in progress, with four more slated to start next year, said Suzanne Solven, deputy registrar of the College of Pharmacists of B.C.

It's part of an increasingly co-ordinated effort to crack down on pharmacists who abuse methadone treatment in an effort to boost profit — pharmacies get money from the government for every dose filled, which has prompt-

ed some to give kickbacks to those who fill prescriptions at their clinics.

People are often prescribed methadone to deal with heroin or opiate addictions, and it can be extremely problematic if they miss doses.

In one high-profile case, residents at two Downtown Eastside single-room occupancy hotels were coerced and intimidated to get methadone exclusively from their notorious landlord.

After the residents of the Palace and the Wonder Rooms told their stories at council in summer 2011, council created a methadone-maintenance-treatment working group.

While drug policy and addiction treatment are outside the city's legislative powers,

Sending a message

"Sometimes the city has to stick its nose into areas that aren't in its jurisdiction."

City manager Dr. Penny Ballam in 2011.

council felt compelled to address the problems faced by some of the 3,000 Vancouverites on methadone treatment.

"Sometimes the city has to stick its nose into areas that aren't in its jurisdiction," city manager Dr. Penny Ballam said.

The city co-ordinated meetings between stakeholders, including the Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users, senior governments, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, the College of Pharmacists and Vancouver Coastal Health — the first time often marginalized methadone users got a seat at the table.

VANDU commended the city for its role in facilitating the meetings. Preliminary results include strategies to deal with complaints of abuse from those on methadone therapy, improving access to treatment as people move from jails and hospitals, and patient liaison groups.

The city has also strengthened its small-scale-pharmacy licence applications to avoid repeat abusers.



A jar of concentrated methadone in Vancouver in August 2006. Undercover operations are being conducted to crack down on pharmacists who are abusing government benefits for supplying the drug. JEFF HODSON/METRO FILE

Council plans protection of community gardens



The community garden at Vancouver City Hall. EMILY JACKSON/METRO

Community gardens might root a little deeper as city council voted to study how to increase their long-term security.

As it stands, the city leases land to community gardens for years at a time but can evict the gardeners with 30 days' notice if it needs the space for something else.

Developers can get tax write-offs if they allow temporary gardens to be built on land awaiting development.

The garden-security motion

passed Wednesday after hours of heartfelt public testimony that expressed the importance of community gardens and addressed fears that potential viaduct removal could harm sections of two of Vancouver's oldest gardens, the Cottonwood and Strathcona gardens on the East Side.

But there are no set-in-stone plans to infringe upon the 22-year-old Cottonwood garden to build alternate routes if the viaducts are torn down,

Mayor Gregor Robertson and the city's transportation director assured speakers.

While the city has spent \$468,000 on a concept plan that recommends removing the viaducts, it has yet to be approved by council. Even if the viaducts are removed, a new connection along Malkin Avenue is just one option.

The city will hold consultations on what viaduct alternatives could look like early next year.

The city has never purchased land with the sole purpose of creating a community garden, but it encourages gardens as part of its goals to be a green, healthy, livable city.

Local gardens also play an important role in Vancouver's long-term food strategy, which is set to launch next year.

EMILY JACKSON/METRO

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Black Tusk Studios breathes new life into gamer industry

Shaping a franchise. Yaletown video-game studio aims to bring cinematic experience to secret development project



MATT KIELTYKA
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There's a new player in town.

After the demise of Rockstar Vancouver and Radical Entertainment earlier this year, recent news about Vancouver's traditional video-game-development scene has been pretty bleak.

But Microsoft is giving the city a boost with the official launch of Black Tusk Studios on Thursday, a studio tasked with creating new, exclusive video-game franchises for the company's game division.

Microsoft's first-party fran-

chises already include heavy hitters like Halo, Gears of War and Forza Motorsport.

"We're hoping to build the next big entertainment franchise," said studio manager Mike Crump, formerly a senior development director at Electronic Arts. "We have an opportunity to define and shape the next big franchise and feel very lucky to be in a position to do that. We've got this mandate to think big and act big."

Black Tusk Studio has already started secretly developing its first game — currently in pre-production — with a staff of about 50 employees during the year.

Now that Microsoft has made Black Tusk's existence public knowledge, the Yaletown-based studio will start hiring more staff through its website, blacktuskstudios.com, as its projects enter production.

But, as is the industry norm, details about Black

Tusk's first game are being kept under wraps until it's at a point Microsoft can show it off to the world.

Crump wasn't even able to say whether his team was working on an Xbox 360 game or for the next-generation successor, which Microsoft is expected to announce in 2013.

He did, however, share the philosophy behind the unannounced project.

"When you look at Triple-A games, one of the things that excites us is the closing gap between games and film," said Crump. "The line is starting to blur. We're starting to see real characters (in games) that look and feel and respond with engagement."

The team is "moving in that direction" of a truly cinematic gaming experience, Crump said.

Proof is the studio's choice of art director.

Before getting into the game business, Henry

LaBounta was nominated for an Academy Award for his special-effects work on 1997's *Twister* and won a British BAFTA award for achievement in special visual-effects for the same film.

He also received a BAFTA nomination for his special-effects work on *Minority Report*.

While cities like Montreal have been stealing studios and talent from Vancouver in recent years, Crump says Microsoft — which also opened a studio in Victoria this year — is committed.

"We believe in Vancouver," said Crump. "There's a bunch of reasons for that. The potential here is enormous: Some of the world's largest franchises have come from here."

The team hasn't announced a release date for its first project, with Crump saying big first-party games usually have a development cycle of several years.



Black Tusk Studios manager Mike Crump. CONTRIBUTED

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Spending cuts looming. B.C. deficit up to \$1.47B due to revenue drop

The provincial deficit is projected to hit \$1.47 billion, up from the forecast two months ago of \$1.1 billion, Finance Minister Mike de Jong said Wednesday.

De Jong blamed falling coal prices and government revenues from property taxes. He says the government has been cutting spend-

ing in an attempt to mitigate a projected \$241-million drop in revenues due to a decline in the natural-gas market.

Premier Christy Clark says the budget numbers are not positive but says the government will keep its promise to table a balanced budget for next year.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Bad disguise

Accused thief shows his stripes

A towel-clad bandit who police claim was in possession of items stolen from a local vehicle was arrested in White Rock on Thursday. Police say a man in a striped towel was seen trying to open several car doors when a resident called police. Mounties picked him up at a nearby convenience store. Michael Reeves, 34, of Surrey was arrested for theft and related charges. He will appear in court this week. KATE WEBB/METRO

Collision

Teen struck, killed by SUV

A 19-year-old woman was hit and killed by an SUV, and a 21-year-old man suffered serious injuries while they were crossing Kingsway at Joyce Street in Vancouver on Tuesday night. The east-bound SUV was driven by a 32-year-old woman.

Investigators have seized the vehicle for mechanical testing. The teen's name had not been released as of Wednesday morning. Witnesses are asked to call police at 604-717-3012. KATE WEBB/METRO

An Ocean Wise move for Chinese seafood resto



Miss World Canada Tara Teng makes a surprise appearance at Szechuan Chongqing on Wednesday to show her support for the restaurant joining the Ocean Wise program. KATE WEBB/METRO

Going sustainable.
One of the hardest
things was convincing
his parents, chef says



KATE
WEBB
kate.webb@metronews.ca

Vancouver's Szechuan Chongqing restaurant became Canada's first Chinese Ocean Wise restaurant on Wednesday, hoping to help turn the tide on overfishing.

The Vancouver Aquarium conservation program has more than 550 partners and 3,200 active restaurants across the country. Its round and blue fish symbol on menus lets diners identify sustainable options and avoid those that are threatened.

Chef Robert Wong said the family business at 1668 West Broadway quietly cut shark-fin soup from its menu about a decade ago. Now it is phasing out things such as sole and some types of prawns in favour of other options, such

as sustainably caught calamari, mussels, sablefish, salmon and oysters.

"It actually took us almost a year to commit because of our parents," Wong said. "It was very hard to explain to them why we're doing this, that we're trying to help out the ocean."

Wong said some of the new options on his menu will increase his costs by 10 to 15 per cent, but others have added value.

"The process of becoming an Ocean Wise partner is a little bit of time — it's an effort. But at the end we're happy to be joining with the help that Ocean Wise provided," he said. "I'm trying to encourage other Chinese restaurants to follow up."

Vancouver Aquarium president John Nightingale commended Wong for making the transition. "We're so proud of Chef Wong and his team," he said. "It takes fortitude to step out and drive a stake in the ground and say, in this case, seafood sustainability matters, so we thank Chef Wong and his team for doing that."

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Review. U.S. to revisit endangered status of whales that ply B.C. and Washington waters

Farmers in California want killer whales that ply the waters between British Columbia and the U.S. to be removed from the endangered-species list, saying the regulations to protect salmon the mammals eat are creating a huge economic burden.

The agricultural industry is being represented by the Pacific Legal Foundation, which has persuaded the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to review whether southern resident killer whales should be de-listed.

NOAA said a petition filed on behalf of two farms and the Center for Environmental Science Accuracy and Reliability presents new information from scientific journals that claim the whales are genetically linked to a much larger population and therefore, are not in danger of extinction.

Damien Schiff, a lawyer for the legal foundation, said southern resident killer whales are no different from

Quoted

"The federal government should continue to look at the killer whale as a single worldwide species."

Damien Schiff, lawyer for Pacific Legal Foundation

orcas around the world but U.S. government regulators invented a new sub-category of orca in the Pacific Northwest in order to label them endangered.

Scientists believe there are about 86 southern resident killer whales, which were listed as endangered by the U.S. in 2005 when there were 89 of them, according to NOAA.

Southern resident killer whales spend much of the year in the Strait of Georgia, the Strait of Juan de Fuca and Puget Sound in Washington and also feed on salmon in California rivers in winter.

THE CANADIAN PRESS



Mammal-eating transient killer whales are photographed off the south side of Unimak Island in the eastern Aleutian Islands of Alaska. Farmers want killer whales that live in the waters between British Columbia and the U.S. removed from the endangered-species list to protect salmon.

ROBERT PITMAN/NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



Able Auctions president Jeremy Dodd stands beside a LeRoy Neiman serigraph of Wayne Gretzky at the company's facility on Vernon Drive in Vancouver on Wednesday. The serigraph, which Dodd says could go for up to \$20,000, is signed by both the artist and Gretzky. **PHYLICIA TORREVILLAS/METRO**

\$2.5M collection goes to auction

Collectibles up for bid.

More than 50,000 hockey cards, 30,000 comics on block



PHYLICIA TORREVILLAS
phylicia.torrevillas@metronews.ca

If you're looking for a piece of comic-book or sports memorabilia that you've been wanting to add to your collection, you're in for a treat.

A huge variety of comic books and sports collectibles

will be on the auction block at Able Auctions this weekend.

The massive collection comes from a single owner and is valued at approximately \$2.5 million.

Able Auctions president Jeremy Dodd said it is one of the largest collections of sports memorabilia and comics in Canada.

"It's very rare to see a collection as massive as this go up for auction all at once, especially these days with eBay and Craigslist," he said Wednesday.

One of the big-ticket items will be a Leroy Neiman seri-

Time to buy

The public can preview all merchandise Thursday and Friday from noon to 6 p.m. at 1055 Vernon Dr. Sports memorabilia are being auctioned Saturday and all comic books Sunday.

were destroyed," Dodd said.

There are also 29 Star Trek Leaf European collector sets valued at \$2,000 and \$4,000 per collection.

Consultant Tim Everett said a 1956 Sugar and Spike comic book in near-mint condition will be the biggest bait for "real hardcore collectors." It's already going for \$800 online and could fetch more than \$2,000.

There are more than 50,000 hockey cards and of the 30,000 comics, most are in special plastic bags with acid-free backing boards.

graph of Wayne Gretzky, signed by both artist and Gretzky, which Dodd says could go for up to \$20,000.

"There are only 50 of them ever produced. Then the plates



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Toronto man sentenced to death in Egypt over film

Trial in absentia.

Canadian convicted of insulting Islam over alleged involvement with anti-Muslim movie

A Canadian who was sentenced to death in absentia Wednesday in Cairo over an anti-Islam movie that caused deadly riots in parts of the Muslim world said he's terrified of being kidnapped and spirited to Egypt.

In an interview with The Canadian Press, Nader Fawzy denied any involvement in the Innocence of Muslims, saying the Egyptian government has long been out to get him because of his Coptic Christian

Full denial

"Now, as a Canadian, I'm convicted for a crime I didn't do."

Nader Fawzy, denying any involvement with the Innocence of Muslims.

activism.

"Of course I'm worried about this death penalty," said Fawzy, a jewelry store manager and president of an international Coptic rights organization. He came to Canada in 2002 from Sweden. He lost his Egyptian citizenship when he became a Swedish citizen in 1992, he said.

"Who will give me guarantees that the Egyptian government will not try to kidnap me to take me to Egypt?"

Fawzy, 53, of Toronto was one of seven Egyptian Coptic Christians convicted and sentenced to death Wednesday along with a Florida pastor for the low-budget movie.

Fawzy said he planned to file a lawsuit against the Egyptian government in Canada for what he said was a wrongful prosecution.

"Let them give me one (piece of evidence) that I had anything to do with that."

Egyptian authorities have

had it in for him since 2007, when he published a book on anti-Coptic sentiment in Egypt called The Persecuted. He also filed a lawsuit against the Cairo government for riots in 2000 that left 23 Copts dead.

The court found all the accused guilty of harming national unity, insulting and publicly attacking Islam and spreading false information, the official Egyptian news agency said.

All of those sentenced live outside Egypt. Also convicted were Mark Basseley Youssef, the man behind the movie, and Florida pastor Terry Jones, who became well-known two years ago when he publicly burned copies of the Muslim holy book. **THE CANADIAN PRESS**



Resisting a return to absolute rule in Egypt

Egyptian protesters clash with security forces near Tahrir Square, in Cairo, on Wednesday. In an escalation of the tug-of-war between Egypt's president and the powerful judiciary, judges in the country's top courts went on strike Wednesday to protest Mohammed Morsi's seizure of near absolute powers, while Islamists rushed to complete a new constitution—the issue at the heart of the dispute. **KHALIL HAMRA/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**



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Medical woes. Women in agony beg Saskatchewan to pay for mesh removal



Marika English is going to California next week to get surgical mesh fully removed. It will set her back \$30,000 unless the government agrees to pay.

ALYSSA McDONALD/METRO IN SASKATOON

One woman has not been able to sit down for seven months.

Another says she feels like she has steel wool inside her.

A third fears she might not have more children.

Ruth Olson, Marika English and Stephanie Brad all say they're in agony because of complications from a surgical mesh.

And they're begging the province of Saskatchewan to pay for the mesh's complete removal.

"We are angry, we are sick and we are in pain," English said Wednesday at the Saskatchewan legislature.

The women had surgical mesh inserted through their vaginas to help with urinary incontinence and pelvic organ prolapse.

But the women say their meshes have failed and are poking into other organs.

They said the Saskatchewan health ministry has turned down their requests for funding out-of-country medical coverage.

The women said complete mesh removal is not available in Canada — that only partial removal is offered by a doctor in British Columbia.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Liberal race. Garneau the spaceman wants to send Harper into orbit

The latest contender for the helm of the federal Liberals hopes his astronaut credentials will give him a lift.

Marc Garneau repeatedly played up his resumé as Canada's first man in space as he officially launched his leadership campaign Wednesday.

The Montreal MP touted himself as the Liberals' best hope for defeating Prime Minister Stephen Harper, having gained the necessary experience and leadership skills during an impressive career before jumping into the political arena in 2008.

"I want to be the prime minister of Canada, I want to be the Liberal leader," Garneau told a news conference in Ottawa.

"I will talk about my strengths and my strengths are proven."

"There will be no modesty

Quoted

"He's a man of ideas and strength."

Justin Trudeau, presumed Liberal frontrunner



Marc Garneau is well-regarded on Parliament Hill as a hard-working MP. PAUL CHIASSON/THE CANADIAN PRESS

here. I'm going to speak specifically about what I've done in the navy, what I've done in the space program, including being the president of the Canadian Space Agency."

Garneau insisted he's not daunted by the prospect of going up against fellow Montreal MP Justin Trudeau, the presumed favourite.

"When I sent in my application (to become an astronaut), I was one of 4,000 people and I ended up No. 1," Garneau said.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Tory pollster censured

Liberals want PM to apologize. Panel raps firm for conducting a misinformation campaign against MP Irwin Cotler

Liberals are demanding an apology from Prime Minister Stephen Harper over the conduct of a Tory pollster.

Campaign Research Inc. was censured for conducting a misinformation campaign against MP Irwin Cotler.

An investigation by the market research industry's watchdog, the Market Re-

search and Intelligence Association, concluded Wednesday that the actions of Campaign Research Inc. brought the industry into disrepute.

The association received seven complaints of professional misconduct against Campaign Research.

The complaints related to a voter identification poll the company conducted last autumn on behalf of the federal Conservative party in Cotler's Montreal riding.

The company's callers suggested to constituents — falsely — that Cotler either had or was about to quit as Liberal MP.

Cotler said the Conserva-

Quoted

"The effort to dislodge Mr. Cotler was, to use a technical term, disgusting. It was beyond any standard we've ever known."

Bob Rae,
interim Liberal leader

tives must now take responsibility for the conduct of their pollster.

"I think they should be severing their ties with the firm that undertook these acts on their behalf," he declared.

"And they themselves should not only apologize, but undertake that they will not engage in such false and misleading voter suppression again."

When Cotler first complained a year ago about the polling being done in his riding, government House leader Peter Van Loan defended it as a routine matter.

He was unrepentant on Wednesday, dodging Liberal questions about the MRIA's ruling by saying that Commons Speaker Andrew Scheer ruled on the matter last December and, hence, there is nothing more to say. "It's a settled issue," Van Loan insisted.

THE CANADIAN PRESS



Hi, partner!

Two partners in trade meet in Ottawa to cement ties and talk economics. Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Mexico's president-elect Enrique Peña Nieto held a news conference on Parliament Hill on Wednesday. Peña Nieto was making a whirlwind visit just three days before being sworn in. Harper said ending a much-maligned visa for Mexican travellers to Canada would be good for both countries.

SEAN KILPATRICK/THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Unhappy with Harper

Palestinians hold pictures of Prime Minister Stephen Harper superimposed with a face of a dog during a protest in front of the Canadian representative offices in the West Bank city of Ramallah, Wednesday, following Harper's remarks about the Palestinian UN bid for an observer state status. Canada affirmed its steadfast opposition to Thursday's vote at the United Nations to confer statehood on Palestine, saying it would not support any "shortcuts" to peace with Israel. MAJDI MOHAMMED/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Status vote. UN bid the last chance to secure two-state solution, Palestinians say

A bid for UN recognition of a state of Palestine is a last-ditch attempt to rescue troubled Middle East peace efforts, a Palestinian spokeswoman said Wednesday, rejecting Israel's charge that it is an attempt to bypass negotiations.

Hanan Ashrawi, a senior Palestinian official, urged the U.S. to drop its opposition to the bid, dismissing Washington's stance as "pathetic" and harmful to American interests in the region. The Palestinians have come under intense pressure from the U.S., Britain and others to modify the bid but "have not succumbed," she said.

On Thursday, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas plans to ask the UN General Assembly to recognize Palestine in the West Bank, Gaza and east Jerusalem, areas Israel captured in the 1967 Mideast war. Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005 but still controls most access.

The Palestinians expect some two-thirds of the General Assembly's 193 members will accept Palestine as a non-member observer state. The U.S., Israel, Canada and a few

Settlements

Abbas has said he will not negotiate as long as Israel keeps expanding settlements on war-won land.

- **West Bank.** Half a million Israelis now live in the West Bank and east Jerusalem, blurring the 1967 lines.
- **Netanyahu.** Beyond a 10-month partial halt in 2009, Netanyahu has refused to freeze construction in settlements.

others are opposed.

The vote will not change the situation on the ground, yet the Palestinians still say it is significant.

Abbas has said UN recognition is not meant to replace negotiations with Israel, but to improve Palestinian leverage and secure the pre-1967 war frontiers as the baseline for future border talks — an idea Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has rejected.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Gaza Strip

Militant groups thank Iran

Residents of the Gaza Strip on Wednesday plastered large billboards in key locations, thanking Iran for its help during a recent eight-day battle against Israel.

The posters reflected the strong ties between Iran and the Hamas and Islamic Jihad militant groups in Gaza. Israel considers Iran to be its most dangerous enemy, citing Iran's support for the militants and its suspect nuclear program.

During the fighting, Gaza militant groups fired hundreds of rockets into Israel, including Iranian-made "Fajr" missiles reaching as far as Tel Aviv and the outskirts of Jerusalem.

Israel has long accused Iran of funneling weapons into the Gaza Strip, but only recently have the militant groups openly acknowledged the origins of their arsenal.

The posters show the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, surrounded by Iranian and Palestinian flags, two hands in a handshake with the message, "Thanks and Gratitude to Iran."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



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Swedish company TOP-TOY's newly-released gender-neutral catalogue. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Toy maker goes gender-neutral

Guns and dolls.

Swedish company retools after drawing criticism for gender roles in its catalogue

Dolls for Billy, toy guns for Sally? One of Sweden's largest toy chains has caused a stir by publishing a gender-neutral catalogue showing girls playing with toys typically perceived as those for boys and vice versa.

TOP-TOY released their gender-neutral Christmas catalogue this week showing a girl brandishing a toy gun and a boy playing with a doll, after the company was previously chastised for being too conservative in encouraging outdated gender roles in their marketing

material.

In 2008, the retailer was reprimanded by Swedish Advertising Ombudsman after customers complained about catalogues that featured girls dressed as princesses and boys dressed as superheroes.

The company decided to try a more gender-neutral approach to the catalogues and receive training from the Ombudsman's office.

TOP-TOY produced identical holiday catalogues in Denmark and Sweden, but the gender of the kids is reversed in the Swedish edition. The Danish catalogue shows a boy holding a gun, while in the Swedish version, a girl holds a gun.

The Hello Kitty page in the Swedish catalogue also replaces a girl with a boy and one girl.

The toy maker's regional marketing director Thomas

Meng says similar changes will be made in other Nordic markets as well, but the Swedish catalogue was changed first because the "gender debate in Sweden is further ahead," he said.

Earlier this year, Sweden introduced a new gender-neutral pronoun — 'hen' — to replace he and she in its National Encyclopedia.

The move took place following national debate sparked by the publication of the country's first gender-neutral book Kivi and Monster Dog, in which Kivi wants a dog for "hen" birthday.

And since 2008, the government has spent millions on promoting gender equality in school, including introduction of laws and regulations that ensure that teachers are actively working to reverse gender stereotypes. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Vietnam

U.S. Embassy suspends account with website

The U.S. Embassy in Hanoi has deactivated its account on a popular Vietnamese website that's full of suspected pirated music and Hollywood movies.

The U.S. had used the site to promote American values, including respect for intellectual-property rights.

The State Department on Wednesday said the social media account with ZingMe was suspended after a review prompted by concerns about digital piracy on the site.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Poland

Same-sex couples win the battle for inheritance rights

Poland's Supreme Court said Wednesday that a same-sex partner can inherit the right to a deceased's rented apartment.

The decision extends a right that so far was granted only to spouses, children, grandchildren or unmarried heterosexual partners. The ruling was a response to the case of a gay man, identified only as Adam K., who sued Warsaw city authorities for denying him the right to stay in the city-owned apartment his partner had rented.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Britain

Church of England to vote again on female bishops

The Church of England has taken a tentative step toward trying again to get its governing General Synod to approve female bishops.

The church said Wednesday the Archbishops' Council agreed this week that the issue needed to be resolved and should be restarted when the General Synod next meets in July.

Church legislation authorizing female bishops failed last week when laity in the General Synod failed to muster the necessary two-thirds majority.

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Muskat Falls

Hydro project
may pose mercury
concerns: Inuit

The proposed Muskrat Falls hydro project in Labrador will have major effects downstream, including potential health problems from mercury contamination that will infringe Inuit rights, says the Nunatsiavut government. It cites preliminary results from research samples showing mercury from the Churchill River is already flowing into Lake Melville, a key food source for about 2,000 Inuit.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Gulf oil spill. BP cut out of
new U.S. federal contracts

The Obama administration put a temporary stop to new federal contracts with British oil company BP on Wednesday, citing the company's "lack of business integrity" and criminal proceedings stemming from the Deepwater Horizon disaster in 2010.

The action by the Environmental Protection Administration won't affect current contracts, but bars BP and its affiliates from new government contracts "until the company can provide sufficient evidence to EPA demonstrating that it meets federal business standards," the agency said.

"EPA is taking this action due to BP's lack of business integrity as demonstrated by the

company's conduct with regard to the Deepwater Horizon blowout, explosion, oil spill and response," the agency said in a statement.

In London, BP said it had no immediate comment but expected to make a statement later on Wednesday.

The suspension came the same day two BP rig supervisors and a former executive were arraigned on criminal charges stemming from the deadly explosion and the company's response to the resulting oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. The three men are charged with manslaughter in the deaths of 11 rig workers. They all pleaded not guilty on Wednesday.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



Pools of dispersed oil collect on a section of the public beach in Grand Isle, La., a few months after the 2010 BP oil spill. Citing "a lack of business integrity" at BP, the Obama administration on Wednesday put a temporary stop to new federal contracts with the British oil company. GETTY IMAGES FILE

Anti-corruption
squad nabs former
SNC-Lavalin CEOFraud charges. Arrest
relates to Montreal
superhospital contract

Former SNC-Lavalin CEO Pierre Duhaime THE CANADIAN PRESS FILE

The former head of Canada's biggest engineering firm, who once mused that Quebec was taking sufficient measures to fight corruption in the construction industry, was arrested on Wednesday by the squad at the centre of those efforts.

Pierre Duhaime, the former chief executive of SNC-Lavalin, was taken from his home by police in connection with alleged fraud involving one of Montreal's huge new superhospitals.

The arrest warrant alleges that Duhaime and Riasdh Ben Aissa, another former senior executive, also committed conspiracy to commit fraud and uttered false documents in connection with a contract pertaining to the multibillion-dollar McGill University Health

Centre. The infractions are alleged to have taken place between April 30, 2009, and Aug. 31, 2011.

Duhaime was expected to be released on a promise to appear in court at a later date after being questioned by provincial anti-corruption squad investigators. Squad chief Robert Lafreniere said "international proceedings" have been initiated against Ben Aissa, who is currently detained in Switzerland. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Quebec construction inquiry

- A senator appointed by Prime Minister Stephen Harper says he could not possibly have known that some of his business contacts would someday be accused of having criminal Mafia links. Sen. Leo Housakos reacted Wednesday to details emerging from Quebec's construction inquiry, expressing frustration over what he called a smear-by-association campaign and a "witch hunt."

- Housakos was named at the inquiry for attending meetings that are being scrutinized at the high-profile probe. The inquiry heard he met with two men who now face numerous criminal charges in an unrelated affair.

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HE SAYS...
John Mazerolle
metronews.ca

Oh, joy! It's once again that magical time of year when we get into the "spirit" of Christmas — so called because Christmas, as it was once understood, is dead by the end of November, either killed by the Gods of Consumerism or trampled to death at a shopping mall by people clambering for this year's must-have present: Restraining Order Elmo. Fa la la la la la la la.

It all began last week, with people in their stretchiest shopping pants crawling all over each other during Grey Thursday, Black

Deck your fellow patrons

The more violent aspects seem solely American so far, but we might not be far behind. There were zombies lined up outside Canadian malls at 6 a.m. on Black Friday, because we saw the old ladies hurting each other on the TV and naturally thought, We want some of that.

This made perfect sense.

Watching the Black Friday swarm move through a mall like locusts — leaving behind employees wearing nothing but their smiley-face pins — is fascinating but frightening.

It occurs to me how fitting it is that the 1978 horror allegory Dawn of the Dead was a film about a shopping mall full of flesh-eating zombies that shuffled slowly in a slack-jawed, aimless stupor but that the more recent remake had fast zombies bounding through the mall in a quick, deadly crush. While the first film was clearly meant to mock the day's spirit of consumerism, I think the echo of fast, awful crowds in the second film was just good luck. Living death imitates art.

And all the more fitting since Christmas advertising now starts on Halloween.

The festivities used to kick into gear after Remembrance Day, but I suspect in the future we'll just tell kids the story of how The Veterans Saved Christmas while we enjoy our seasonal Peppermint poppy mochas.

The worst part of all for me is that, despite my non-believer status, I really like Christmas. I like the lights and the outdoor markets and most of the music, and so it kills me a little to see people getting all mobby over stuff they'll forget about by Jan. 3.

The more violent aspects seem solely American so far, but we might not be far behind. There were zombies lined up outside Canadian malls at 6 a.m. on Black Friday, because we saw the old ladies hurting each other on the TV and naturally thought, We want some of that.

In the spirit of Christmas giving, might I suggest that we return the favour by giving Americans our Boxing Day sales? Given their track record, they'll enjoy another shopping day while making the name more apt than ever.



Customers wait in line to enter Best Buy on Black Friday in Fort Worth, Texas. According to recent data, Black Friday is expected to attract zombies to Canadian malls by 2014. TOM PENNINGTON/GETTY IMAGES

Still trying to impress Olive Oyl



STEPHAN SAVOIA/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ripped

Hey, Popeye, where's your pipe?

Don't tell Popeye. It turns out you don't need to eat your spinach to get the world's biggest arms. Bodybuilder Moustafa Ismail insists they are all-natural, the result of a punishing workout regimen he started after a guest at his uncle's wedding in his native Egypt mocked his overweight frame.

"They call me Popeye, the Egyptian Popeye," Ismail, 24, said while working out in the Boston suburb of Milford. But unlike the

cartoon character, "I like chicken, beef — anything but spinach."

It's not easy having the world's biggest arms.

Skeptics say there must also be steroids or some other artificial means behind Ismail's beyond-bulging biceps and triceps, and Guinness World Records is now waffling on whether to recognize him.

Controversy ensued when Guinness decided to recognize him as having the largest upper-arm muscles. In response to critics, they are now conducting research with medical specialists and reviewing Ismail's category.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Big guns

- Ismail started building his muscles in his Egyptian hometown of Alexandria before moving to the United States in 2007 and settling in Franklin, southwest of Boston.

- To pay for his gym membership and daily dietary requirements, he worked two jobs as a gas-station attendant, but gave up one after his wife began to complain that he was pushing himself too hard.

No sweat

31 inches

Ismail eats three kilograms of protein and four kilograms of carbohydrates, and drinks 11 litres of water each day to help maintain upper arms that measure 31 inches around — as big as a small man's waist. Generous amounts of poultry, seafood and shakes provide the protein he needs to fuel daily two-hour workouts in which he lifts as much as 600 pounds.

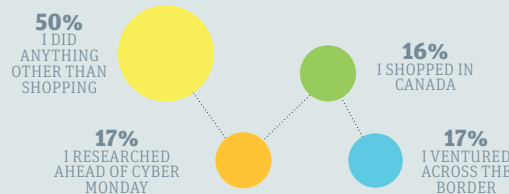
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What did you do on Black Friday?



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@BrentToderian: Now that #Vancouver's new @VanTransp2040 Plan is approved, will Council show boldness & move to take down the Viaducts? pic.twitter.com/gNAXhQ4v

@MayorGregor: Vancouver's proposed 2013 budget is online now. Council meeting to hear from the public next Tues <http://ow.ly/fEurw>

@gpaterno17: Now that he's a HOFer I'm thinking of making a custom Vancouver Canucks jersey with Pavel Bure's name and number on it. #Legend

@Tourism_Burnaby: Bring an unwrapped toy/donation to the Hilton Vancouver Metrotown this Fri in exchange for breakfast! 6-9am <http://ow.ly/fER8H>

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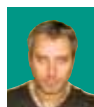
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2
SCENEGet in the festive mood
with a month of arts events**Move over Scrooge.**

Quit saying bah-humbug and get on the holiday bandwagon with one of the city's many yuletide happenings

**BACKSTAGE
PASS**

Graeme McRanor
vancouver@metronews.ca

Behold! The 2012 Holiday Arts Spectacular!

Attention shoppers: there are only 25 days left until the holiday formerly known as Christmas. Maybe you're stuck for gift ideas. Or, if you're like me, you don't even give it a passing thought until it's only a day or two away.

Maybe you're not a fan of baby Jesus. Messiahs aren't for everybody. But you know what is? This column.

Ladies and gentlemen behold! The 2012 Holiday Arts Spectacular! (Praise something.)

It's a Wonderful Life

It's also a holiday heart-warmer and it's playing at the Arts Club's Granville Island Stage until Dec. 29. More than 70,000 people have seen it over the past five years — why haven't you? Tickets available at artsclub.com.

Nutcracker

Ballet B.C. presents Canada's Royal Winnipeg Ballet at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre for five shows from Dec. 14 to 16. Visit balletbc.com.

Amaluna

Not necessarily holiday fare but it's proving to be a popular

show — Cirque recently added another 16 shows so it will now run until Jan. 13 under the Grand Chapiteau at Concord Pacific Place. More info at cirquedusoleil.com.

White Christmas

The Musical — hey, this might be the only White Christmas you see this year in Vancouver. At the Arts Club's Stanley Industrial Alliance Stage until Dec. 23. Visit artsclub.com for more info.

**The VSO's
Traditional Christmas**

The Vancouver Symphony Orchestra presents its annual concert featuring carols, Christmas music, and, yes, audience sing-alongs. From Dec. 13 to Dec. 22. Visit VancouverSymphony.ca for information.

**Vancouver Chamber
Choir — Saint Nicolas
with Ben Heppner**

Christmas at the Orpheum — Tenor Ben Heppner sings the Saint Nicolas cantata by Benjamin Britten. One night only, Dec. 7. More information at vancouverchamberchoir.com.

The Santaland Diaries

From popular humourist David Sedaris and based on his time working as an elf at Macy's Santaland. This one's a fun one. Plays until Dec. 22 at the Revue Stage on Granville Island. Tickets at artsclub.com.

**Grouse Mountain's
The Peak of Christmas**

OK, maybe not technically an arts listing but holy rampaging Rudolfs they've got real reindeers! There's also live entertainment, breakfast with Santa, outdoor ice skating, and more. Until Dec. 24. Check out grousemountain.com.



The Nutcracker is coming to Vancouver for the holiday season. CONTRIBUTED

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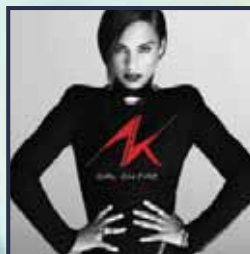
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Ray Liotta stars in the latest mobster drama Killing Them Softly. HANDOUT

Ray Liotta treads softly in his latest mob role

New movie. Best known for his bad guy roles, Liotta flips the script in Killing Them Softly as he becomes a good guy mobster

HEIDI
PATALANO
Metro World News

Ray Liotta knows how to give a hell of a fake beating. He's also good at taking one, as he does in his latest film — mobster drama Killing Them Softly. Though fans are still asking him to say lines from his iconic role in 1994's Goodfellas, the New Jersey native doesn't mind slipping back into the role of a gangster for Andrew Dominik's new film, especially since, as he says, he's playing a good gangster this time around.

In this film, the mob underworld serves as a microcosm for the country as a whole. So many people felt victimized by the 2008 financial crisis, which is when this film

Quoted

"Everybody got hit. I'm not sure, but I guess it happens to all walks of life. You don't think of it as maybe hurting people who do illegal things, but it stands to reason (the effect of the crisis), I guess, would be across the board."

Ray Liotta
Talking about the 2008 financial crisis.

is set. The mobsters who get ripped off in the card game robberies represent the general public. What do you think is the allegorical message of all of that?

Just that everybody needs money. Everybody got hit. I'm not sure, but I guess it happens to all walks of life. You don't think of it as maybe hurting people who do illegal things, but it stands to reason (the effect of the crisis), I guess, would be across the board — good guys and bad guys.

It's refreshing how the film places the mob in the context of the crisis. Is that one of the things that attracted you to this role?

That was in the book ... But that's not why I did it. I did it more just because it was a really interesting story and it was nice to play somebody who was the victim as opposed to the aggressor. It was different in terms of the bad guys that I've played.

What was the strangest mob story you've been asked to do?

I get to play cops — bad cops, some bad guys. I've only played two guys who were in the mob, Goodfellas and then I've got one coming out, Ice Man, which is a really good movie. I was asked to do The Sopranos, but it just wasn't the right time to do it. In the beginning of my career, I handled it very delicately in terms of limiting the bad guys. The irony of it all is I've never been in a fight in my whole life, yet I play and they ask me to do these kinds of guys.

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Hobbit fans revelling in New Zealand premiere of Jackson's latest production

Coming to theatres.

Fans and actors laud most recent effort from Jackson, who credits unusual shooting style for success

Wearing elf ears and wizard hats, sitting atop their dad's shoulders or peering from balconies, tens of thousands of New Zealanders watched their favourite Hobbit actors walk the red carpet Wednesday at the film trilogy's hometown premiere.

An Air New Zealand plane freshly painted with Hobbit characters flew low over Wellington's Embassy Theatre, eliciting roars of approval from the crowd.

Sam Rashidmardani, 12, said he came to see Gollum actor Andy Serkis walk the red carpet — and he wasn't disappointed.

"It was amazing," Rashidmardani said of the evening,



Director Peter Jackson poses with his daughter Katie on the red carpet at the premiere of his new film *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey*, in New Zealand. ROSS SETFORD/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

adding his Gollum impression: "My precious."

British actor Martin Freeman, who brings comedic

timing to the lead role of Bilbo Baggins, said he thought director Peter Jackson had done a fantastic job on *The Hobbit*:

An *Unexpected Journey*.

"He's done it again," Freeman said in an interview on the red carpet.

"If it's possible, it's probably even better than *The Lord of the Rings*. I think he's surpassed it."

While it is unusual for a city so far from Hollywood to host the premiere of a hoped-for blockbuster, Jackson's filming of his lauded LOTR trilogy and now *The Hobbit* in New Zealand has helped create a film industry here. The film will open in theatres around the world next month.

One of the talking points of the film is the choice by Jackson to shoot it using 48 frames per second instead of the traditional 24 in hopes of improving the picture quality.

Some say the images come out too clear and look so realistic that they take away from the magic of the film medium. Jackson likens it to advancing from vinyl records to CDs.

"I really think 48 frames is pretty terrific and I'm looking forward to seeing the reaction," Jackson said on the

Quoted

"I really think 48 frames is pretty terrific and I'm looking forward to seeing the reaction. It's been talked about for so long, but finally the film is being released and people can decide for themselves."

Peter Jackson
Director of *The Hobbit*.

red carpet. "It's been talked about for so long, but finally the film is being released and people can decide for themselves."

Jackson said it was strange working on the project so intimately for two years and then having it suddenly taken away as the world got to see the movie.

"It spins your head a little bit," he said.

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Gabriel Aubry

Gabriel Aubry fails to have restraining order from Halle Berry lifted

Gabriel Aubry's efforts to have the restraining order against him lifted following a Thanksgiving brawl with ex-girlfriend Halle Berry's fiancé, Olivier Martinez, have failed, with a judge denying his request to dismiss the ban, according to TMZ. The order, which

requires Aubry to stay at least 100 yards away from Martinez, Berry and the four-year-old daughter Aubry shares with Berry, Nahla, is set to expire today due to a clerical error, though Berry is expected to file a request to extend the ban.



METRO DISH

OUR TAKE ON THE WORLD OF CELEBRITIES

The Word



That was quick! Jessica Simpson is pregnant again



THE WORD
Dorothy Robinson
scene@metronews.ca

Whoa. Here's some news I didn't see coming: Jessica Simpson is pregnant, again.

Seven months after giving birth to daughter Maxwell, Jessica Simpson is reportedly already expecting another child, according to Us Weekly. "It definitely wasn't planned," a source says. "But yes, Jessica is pregnant again." This would be the second baby for Simpson and fiancé Eric Johnson. A rep for Simpson has yet to comment.

Oh man, you guys. This brings up so many questions, mainly: What was she thinking? But also: Is she taking cues from notorious quick-turnaround-breeder Tori Spelling? (Ed note: Never, ever take life tips from Tori Spelling.) What will happen to her multimillion dollar campaign with Weight Watchers? Because you know girlfriend isn't going to slim down anytime soon. And does this mean we're all going to be subjected to photos of her being gigantic yet again? As someone who has a seven-month-old at home, I'm down with pregnant ladies and have nothing but respect for them, but my Us Weekly just finally stopped running photos of her waddling around L.A. Hey, paparazzi — I think we (and probably Jessica Simpson) could use a little break. Let's let her gestate in peace this go round, OK?



Dolly Parton

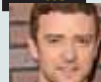
Parton rubbishes gay best friend rumours

Despite being married to Carl Dean for 46 years, Dolly Parton has been dogged by rumours romantically linking her to best friend Judy Ogilvy for years. "Judy and I have been best friends since we were like in the third and fourth grade," Parton says in an interview with ABC's Nightline. "We still just have a great friendship and

relationship and I love her as much as I love anybody in the whole world, but we're not romantically involved." On the plus side, the persistent rumours did give Parton something she could bond over with Oprah Winfrey: "Like Gayle (King), her friend, Judy, my friend, they just think that you just can't be that close to somebody," Parton says.



Twitter



@jtimberlake
Memphis ... I love you. Always good to come home. Thanksgiving has got to be the best holiday. Also, I'm a pig.



@pattyduke_id
Have any of you heard or seen an article on twitter going to start charging a fee. Let me know, got a tweet saying it, but might be hacker



@JonahHill
Now I'm watching Black Swan and this movie is crazy and amazing



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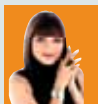
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@Jeanne_Beker: At the CTV Bellmedia Queen St. W. bldg+something big, new+exciting is brewing! Our release goes out at noon. Stay tuned!!

@Jeanne_Beker: The word is out: We're launching theLoop.ca by Sympatico Dec. 13th

@Jeanne_Beker: TheLoop.ca will be a cutting edge lifestyle destination with plenty of style to keep you satiated!



@Jeanne_Beker: With the inspiring +lovely Senator Linda Frum. Just interviewed her at the Harold Green Theatre.



@Jeanne_Beker: Bekky @qualityslippers graciously agrees to don @EDITbyJeanneB Spring 2013 for a quick shot!



@Jeanne_Beker: Just 2 of the many FANTABULOUS prs of shoes that the divine @ConradNadeau has brought for our shoot.



@Jeanne_Beker: So many shots to choose from @EDITbyJeanneB for spring! Love @Mackenzie_photo too. :)

The Kit

Canadian street style

Spotted in: Toronto

Freya Bernales
Architectural drafts person
Age: 23

What she's wearing

Zara jacket, Tiffany necklace, Forever 21 shirt, H&M jeans, Lola Shoetique shoes, Marc Jacobs bag, Ray Ban glasses

Her inspiration

"I try to avoid trends in favour of more classic looks — things I can mix and match easily."

THE KIT PHOTOBLOGGER: TIFFANY TRINIDAD,
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CHICKEN TERIYAKI

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Everlasting beauties: Choosing an artificial Christmas tree



DESIGN CENTRE
Karl Lohnes
home@metronews.ca

Choosing an artificial Christmas tree for your home can be an easy alternative to the delivery, set-up, care and messy removal involved in getting a real one. They're also fireproof, which makes them a favourite for apartment and condo dwellers who may not be able to have the real thing.

Artificial trees now come with long-lasting lights, realistic branches and designer touches like snow, ice crystals and pine cones.

Price

Artificial Christmas trees cost \$79 to \$1,200 depending on height, the number of lights, amount of branches and the quality of construction. On average, a good tree will cost \$30 to \$50 for each linear foot of the tree's height.

Size

Match the size of a tree to your ceiling's height and reduce the

size by six inches.

For example, if you have an eight-foot ceiling, choose a tree that is 7 1/2 feet in height. In rooms with exceptionally high ceilings, choose a tree that is at least two-thirds of the ceiling's height. Anything shorter will look dwarfed in the room.

Also consider the diameter at the bottom of the tree. This will determine how much floor space you will be taking up once the tree is assembled.

If space is at a premium, then consider a slim tree where the diameter of the base is less than four feet.

Lights

A quality tree will have 75 to 100 lights for each foot of the tree's height.

Look for features like floor step pedals to make turning the



Winner of the most realistic-looking artificial tree is the 7 1/2 inch Snowy Fir Tree from The Martha Stewart Collection. \$279, homedepot.ca.

lights on and off easier and a continuous light source, meaning if one bulb burns out or is removed, the other lights will continue to work.

Most artificial trees come pre-lit with clear/warm white lights. If you want trendy coloured lights instead, simply add them to the tree and don't plug in the clear pre-wired ones. A great way to change the look of your tree from year to year is with the investment of some new coloured lights.

Branches/tips

The more branches and tips on the tree, the fuller it will look and the more room you'll have to hang decorations.

Look for exceptional details like pine cones, a variety of baby-looking branch tips/needles, spacing between the branch layers of less than eight to 10 inches. This will give the tree a full, realistic look.

You can also wire on real pine cones and add fresh greenery to the tree for a lush look.



In extra tall spaces, the tree must reach at least half of the ceiling's height. Inset: A quality everlasting tree will have details like a variety of greens, pinecones, many tips and will be pre-lit for convenience. PHOTOS SUPPLIED

Cleaning

Scrub the glass, not the art

Why does it matter when you clean glass on a picture frame hanging on the wall that you spray your cloth to clean the glass, rather than spraying the glass directly, then using your cloth to clean the glass? I don't see any difference.



CHARLES THE BUTLER
askcharles@thebutler@metronews.ca
For more, visit charlesmacpherson.com

Well firstly, from a cleaning perspective, you're

cleaning the glass either way. However, the reason it is best practice to always spray your cloth then wipe the glass is two-fold.

Firstly, you use less cleaning product.

Remember, I am always an advocate for less is more and less cleaning solution is generally a good thing.

But the second reason to spray the cloth is that when you spray the liquid on the glass, it starts to run down the glass.

It's easy to use too much liquid. The excess liquid that you are unable to catch goes down the glass inside the frame and ultimately bleeds on the art, thus damaging the art or the matting that surrounds the art.



If you spray the glass directly, it can run down to the frame and damage the art. ISTOCK IMAGES

Maximize your green when decorating this season

How do I decorate for a green Christmas?



QUEEN OF GREEN
Tovah Paglaro
green@metronews.ca

Christmas decor is big business! North Americans spend upwards of \$18 billion a year on seasonal decorations. And while I urge you to opt out and take a DIY approach to creating a festive atmosphere, it does equate to an awful lot of buying power!

So this season, if you are making purchases, make sure you're capitalizing on that buying power by investing in a green Christmas.

Christmas Lights

Christmas lights are a must for many, but make sure you use electricity sparingly. LED lights are now the standard. If you haven't adopted them yet, please do! This is one area where it's greenest to recycle the old and buy the new.

Maximize your green by using a timer to light up those LED lights only during prime hours.

Choose Reusable & Natural Materials

There is nothing festive about filling your home with toxic materials, like BPA- or PVC-laden plastics. And there's nothing merry about the production process used to create plastic decor. Aside from plastic bobbles, the worst offenders are tinsel and artificial snow — you know, the aerosol spray for windows.

Invest instead in items made from long-lasting, non-toxic materials like wood, ceramics and felt. These will bring joy year after year.

Hit a Craft Fair

Craft fairs are making a comeback, and for good reason. Brimming with sustainable local cheer, vendors and buyers alike seek to celebrate in style. Local artisans often find innovative ways to create using up-cycled items, natural materials and handmade methods.

I always find a gem to add to the tree and leave with plenty of inspiration for our own homemade items.

Less Is More

The greatest thing you can do to keep your holiday decor green is to take a less-is-more



Less is more! Don't get too swept up in the need to buy. ISTOCK IMAGES

approach. Get swept up in the holiday spirit, but don't get swept up in the over-consumptive need to buy. A few treasured items can go a long way toward creating holidays that celebrate kindness,

gratitude and family.

Have questions for the Queen of Green? Write to tpaglaro@davidssuzuki.org or tweet @DavidSuzukiGoG





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Are you a property virgin? Your real estate goals could be closer than you think

**EMMA
GODMERE**
life@metronews.ca

Owning your first home is a major milestone. Buying property is likely one of the first significant investments you'll ever make — and it's an investment that you get to enjoy while it appreciates.

For young people in particular, the idea of getting a mortgage can feel like an insurmountable obstacle amid the reality of student and consumer debt, but your real estate goals don't have to be as far away as you think.

"You can never start too early," says Mark Salerno, corporate representative with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. "If you start early enough, you're going to know the degree of challenge that you're going to have."

Salerno suggests first meeting with your bank to assess what kind of mortgage you might qualify for. Some hopeful homeowners may need to address debt and income concerns before taking the plunge, but banks and credit counselling agencies can help you become a better mortgage candidate.

If you're given the green light, the next task is finding a realtor.

Realtors will be able to shed light on market conditions, trends and prices, and help you

Start sharing

This is the fourth in a week-long series of articles chronicling some of the rites of passage many of Metro's readers will experience as they leave the nest or school and head out on their own.

How did you find your first apartment? Any tips

you'd like to share? Visit metronews.ca/features/firsts, tweet us or even turn to the person next to you and share your stories.



Three things to consider when looking for a new home

- Do you want a new home or a resale home? New homes will offer more up-to-date features, but can incur extra costs like GST or HST, for which there's no rebate if the house is more than \$450,000. Resale homes may need renovations, but are most likely surrounded by established neighbourhoods.
- Is the neighbourhood sustainable? A sustainable neighbourhood ideally offers affordable homes, access to public transportation, and proximity to schools, shops and work. Residents in sustainable neighbourhoods should also be able to choose healthier transportation options, like walking and cycling.
- How much space do you need when it comes to bedrooms, bathrooms, storage, and outdoor areas? The CMHC recommends buying a home that meets most of your projected needs for the next five to 10 years.

comb through real estate listings.

A good place to start is with the Canadian Real Estate Association, which can link you to a realtor in your area. Realtors can also connect you to other important individuals like home inspectors and help negotiate a deal when you're ready to buy. Some financial analysts may suggest renting a home is a better long-term approach,

but while Salerno agrees it can be the more affordable option, he emphasizes the benefits of investing in your own piece of real estate are worth the purchase.

"The market, on average, over time appreciates and you then have a means to build equity in your home," he says. "If you're in a renting situation, you're paying a mortgage — but it's your landlord's mortgage."

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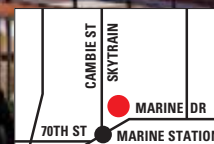
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How are the acoustics in your home?

DIY ideas. Install wall panelling in your man cave so music and speech becomes amplified and clear

Any home theatre or rock and roll sanctuary can be improved by updating the acoustics of the room.

An easy way to do this yourself is to add wall paneling — or sound absorption panels — that will improve acoustics in the room by reducing noise levels and eliminating echoes.

This is just one way to create a refuge to enjoy what you love, something contractor Jason Cameron and former NFL player Tony Siragusa do every week on Man Caves. They offer amazing ideas to help homeowners everywhere construct their own personal hangouts.

Step 1: Make a plan

Think about the size and layout of your room, including the placement of any speakers, and determine how many panels will be required.

Keep in mind it's generally advised to install a panel

every 12 inches throughout the room. Consider if you'd like your panels to be the same size, or a range of sizes depending on your style and room size.

Step 2: Materials and assembly

The core material of the panel will need to be sound-absorbing insulation that is two inches thick, cut down to the size of panels you've decided to use.

This insulation will then need a wood frame in order to secure it and hang on the wall.

An inexpensive way to make this frame is by using furring strips in a size large enough to lay flat with the insulation, around two inches thick.

Cut them to the size of your insulation panel, and secure the corners of each frame with wood glue. Spray adhesive to the interior of the frame and exterior edge of the insulation panel in order to secure both materials together. Place the insulation inside the frame. Allow 24 hours for both glues to dry.

Step 3: Cover and decorate

Use a sound-transparent fab-

ric to cover your panel.

Thick fabrics like vinyl or leather will reflect the sound and make the panel redundant.

Instead, choose a breathable fabric like cotton or burlap that will allow the sound to travel into the insulation and be absorbed. This is also an opportunity to choose a colour or design that complements your room.

To cover your panel, stretch the fabric around the frame and staple on the back every three inches, neatly folding each corner. Trim the excess fabric and spray the remaining with adhesive so it lays flat.

Step 4: Mount the panels

Mount your panels as you would a heavy piece of artwork.

Both D-ring hangers and impaling clips are recommended, but use your own judgment and precautions for your room and walls.

Step 5: Listen

Enjoy your new home theatre or musical area with brand-new and improved acoustics!

MAN CAVES AIRS FRIDAYS AT 9 P.M. ET/PT ON DIY NETWORK CANADA



Former NFL player Tony Siragusa, left, with contractor Jason Cameron. HANDOUT

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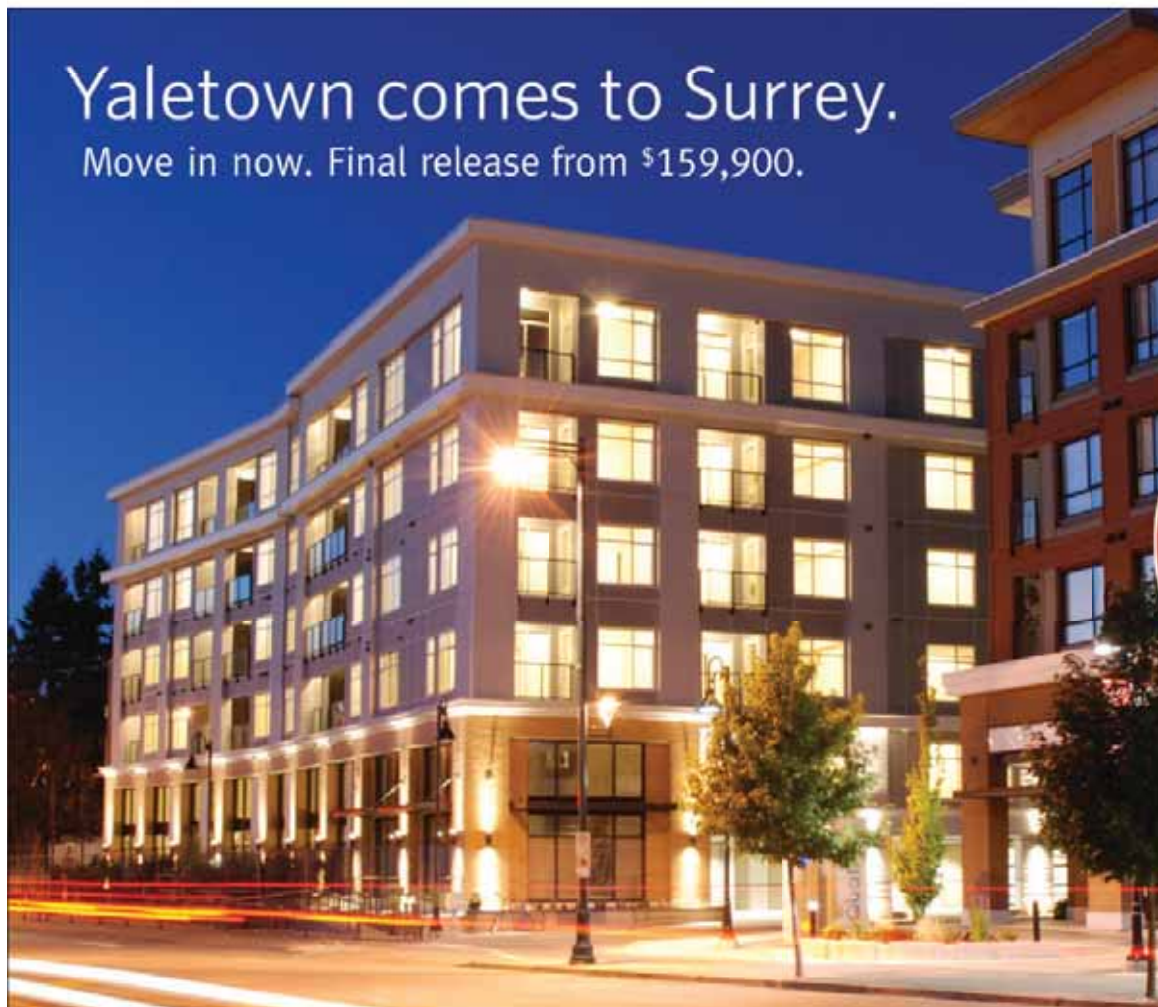


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Snowman and Santa: The final product. SUBMITTED

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STEVEN AND CHRIS RETURN WITH NEW EPISODES JAN. 7 ON CBC. THEIR ROSTER OF EXPERTS DELIVER IDEAS AND ADVICE ON TOPICS INCLUDING HOME DECOR, FOOD AND ENTERTAINING, HEALTH AND FITNESS AND MORE.

In this fun family holiday DIY, Steven shows us that you can give Christmas cookies in style.

Simple pastry boxes are transformed into festive sculptures fit to house any holiday treat!

Directions

Snowman:

1. Stack three white pastry boxes one on top of the other.
2. Add button detailing for some three dimensional interest and to create eyes and a smile for your snowman.
3. Use some birch bark scrap to create a nose.
4. Bend and wrap wire into the shape of a top hat and secure it using a dot of hot glue.

5. Insert twigs with berries as arms for your snowman. (Note: You may also have to secure them with a dot of hot glue.)

- 6 Add some cookies and you are ready to go!

Santa:

1. Stack red boxes one on top of the other.
2. Add buttons and ribbon detailing to create Santa's face.
3. The small hat on Santa's head was sold as a doggy Christmas hat at the dollar store.
4. Ribbon and birch bark finished off Santa's look, creating his signature belt.
5. Put some cookies in his belly and give this fun gift to anyone!

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Unlikely trio of cherries, almonds and wild rice wows in Stuffed Pork

This impressive dish features juicy pork tenderloin filled with dried cherries, hearty wild rice, herbs and roasted almonds. It's sure to be the star of your gathering and will have your guests coming back for more!

Ingredients

- 2 tbsp (30 ml) olive oil
- 1 small yellow onion, diced
- 6 oz (170 g) Italian sausage, removed from casing
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/4 cup (50 ml) chopped parsley
- 1 tbsp (15 ml) chopped fresh thyme
- 1 tbsp (15 ml) chopped fresh rosemary
- 1/3 cup (75 ml) coarsely chopped dried cherries
- 1/2 cup (125 ml) coarsely chopped roasted almonds
- 1 cup (250 ml) cooked wild rice
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 1/2 lb (1.1 kgs) boneless pork loin, filleted
- Kitchen twine for wrapping
- Salt and pepper for topping

1. In a medium saucepan over medium heat, warm olive oil. Add onions and sauté until translucent, about 3 to 5 minutes. Add sausage and garlic and cook until browned and cooked through. Remove from heat and add parsley, thyme, rosemary, dried cherries and almonds. Stir in wild rice; add salt and pepper to taste.

2. Preheat oven to 350 F (180 C). Spread filleted pork loin out on a clean work surface. Top pork loin with prepared stuffing from edge to edge. Starting from the short side, roll pork loin and stuffing into a spiral.

3. Tie roll together with heavy-duty kitchen string in the centre and at the two ends of roast to prevent it from unrolling in the oven. Place roast on a rack in a shallow roasting pan and sprinkle generously with salt and pepper. Insert an oven-safe meat thermometer into the centre of the roast and cook for 1 hour.

Cherry, Almond and Wild-Rice-Stuffed Pork Loin



This recipe serves six to eight. NEWS CANADA

Reduce heat to 325 F (160 C) and continue to cook for another 45 to 60 minutes.

4. Remove roast from the

oven once the meat thermometer reaches 160 F (71 C). Allow meat to rest in the pan, loosely covered with foil for 20 to 30 minutes.

5. Remove from pan and cut twine away from the roast. Slice and serve.

NEWS CANADA/ ALMOND BOARD

Cookbook of the Week

Rice up your dinner

The recipes in 300 Best Rice Cooker Recipes by Katie Chin are inspired by flavours from around the corner and around the world. They also prove that every type of meal can be prepared in a rice cooker, from appetizers, soups and salads to main dishes, one pot meals and side dishes.

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Vancouver Giants forward Anthony Ast, centre, battles Moose Jaw Warriors defenceman Morgan Rielly for the loose puck in front of Warriors goalie Justin Paulic during the first period of Wednesday's game at the Pacific Coliseum. CAM TUCKER/METRO

Smooth-skating Rielly buries Giants

WHL. Vancouver loses a fifth straight game despite valiant effort by goaltender Lee



CAM TUCKER
cam.tucker@metronews.ca

Morgan Rielly was dangerous all night. It seemed like only a matter of time before he was rewarded.

A product of the Holbyburn Country Club in West Vancouver, the smooth-skating Rielly buried his own rebound on a two-on-one

rush to give the Moose Jaw Warriors a 2-1 lead over the host Vancouver Giants with 4:51 remaining in the third period.

That ended up being the final score, before a crowd of 5,525 fans at the Pacific Coliseum on Wednesday night.

The Giants have now lost five straight games.

Goaltender Payton Lee, 16, held Vancouver in the game, particularly in the first two periods, when the Giants were outshot a combined 23-7.

Lee made 32 saves on the night.

Tristan Sieben scored the lone Giants goal of the night.

Discipline for Winterhawks

The Western Hockey League slammed the Portland Winterhawks with massive disciplinary sanctions for player-benefit violations, the league announced Wednesday.

- The violations took place over the past four seasons, the WHL said.
- The Winterhawks will not be allowed to take part in

the first five rounds of the 2013 Bantam Draft, and will forfeit their first-round picks in the 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017 drafts.

- The WHL also fined the Winterhawks \$200,000 and suspended general manager and head coach Mike Johnston for the remainder of the regular season and playoffs.

Sprawled on his back, Sieben was able to swipe the puck past Warriors goalie Justin

Paulic on a wrap-around attempt to give Vancouver an early lead.

Soccer

SFU making most of NCAA opportunity

Last year, the SFU Clan men's soccer team accrued an overall record of 18-0-1, but couldn't compete in playoffs.

Fortunes have changed and technicalities cleared up.

SFU, which in 2010 became the first non-American school to compete in the NCAA, was granted full NCAA membership status this summer and given an exemption to compete for championships this year as part of a pilot project.

The Clan's men's soccer team has made the most of the opportunity.

Not only did it advance to the playoffs on the strength of a 12-1-1 Great Northwest Athletic Conference record, it is two wins away from a NCAA Division II national championship.

It could accomplish the historic feat on Dec. 1, which would be the three-month anniversary of the NCAA executive council's decision to make SFU a full member.

The Clan must defeat the Saginaw Valley Cardinals in Thursday's Final Four semifinal in Evans, Ga., to advance to the final.

"I have had some opportunities for national championships, but this is the most excited and the most proud I've ever been of a university, our coaching staff and our student-athletes," said Dr. Milton Richards, SFU's senior director for athletics and recreation.

"The fact that we're first-year, we're the first international school to be in the NCAA, and to be competing for the national championship ... is just unbelievable."

Thursday's semifinal will be live-streamed on the NCAA website, and viewing parties are expected at SFU.

CAM TUCKER/METRO

Canucks' Schneider on way to Switzerland



Canucks goalie Cory Schneider has signed a contract with the Swiss team Ambri-Piotta. HARRY HOW/GETTY IMAGES FILE

Cory Schneider became the third member of the Vancouver Canucks to depart for Europe, as the NHL lockout continues.

Schneider, the 26-year-old puck stopper who is expected to be the Canucks' starting goalie whenever the lockout ends, has signed with the National League A's HC Ambri-Piotta, the Swiss club announced on its website Wednesday.

The deal runs through Dec. 31, according to the Ambri-Piotta website.

Schneider is one of two Canucks on the NHLPA bargaining committee — the other is Manny Malhotra.

So far, the league and the players' association are still entrenched in labour negotiations as the two sides try and reach a new collective bargaining agreement. The old agreement expired on Sept. 15.

The lockout — the third work stoppage that the league, its players and fans have endured since 1994 — entered its 75th day on Wednesday.

Schneider seemed to be growing increasingly frustrated with where negotiations stood.

"Every day that goes by it's another day that we lose games and do damage to the game," Schneider told reporters just before U.S. Thanksgiving.

"We need to find a way to jump-start this again. Either our side's gotta step up or their side's gotta do something, but I think every day that goes by it just doesn't look as good."

U.S. federal mediators have now joined the ongoing dispute.

Last season, Schneider posted a record of 20-8-1 in 33 games played, posting a .937 save percentage and 1.96 goals-against average.

He usurped Roberto Luongo as the Canucks starter in the first round of the playoffs against the Los Angeles Kings.

The Canucks lost the series in five games. CAM TUCKER/METRO

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Former ballerina turned skeleton racer looking lively on track

Road to Sochi.

Calgary's Sarah Reid needs two more top-six results to qualify for 2014 Winter Olympics

Sarah Reid tried to go from being a ballerina to a bobsledder, but the conversion did not work out as planned.

So she turned to the sport of skeleton instead. The move, which she made a decade ago, is paying off on the World Cup circuit this season.

The 25-year-old Calgary racer placed first and second in two of the season's first three World Cup events. As the team heads to Europe, she needs two more top-six results, including one next season, to qualify for the 2014 Winter Olympics.

"When I stopped dance, I wanted to do something really different, try something new, and I originally really wanted to do bobsleigh,"



Sarah Reid competes at the women's World Cup skeleton event last Friday in Whistler, B.C. The 25-year-old Calgary racer has placed first and second in two of the season's first three World Cup events. DARRYL DYCK/THE CANADIAN PRESS FILE

she said. "I didn't even know what skeleton was at the time."

Reid, who specialized in the Cecchetti form of ballet, was on the verge of qualifying

for her teaching certificate in the discipline when she had a change of heart. She contacted the national team's Calgary base, and arranged to go to a Bobsleigh Canada se-

lection camp. But the diminutive Reid soon discovered that bobsled, which requires considerable strength and explosive speed to push a heavy sled, was not for her.

"Once I actually got out there in the ice house with all the other bobsleigh athletes, it was pretty apparent that I'm way too small for bobsleigh," she said. "I was really

Quoted



"It was just time to try something different."

Skeleton competitor Sarah Reid on her new sled, which her coach Duff Gibson assumes is mostly responsible for the improvement for Reid, a "big competitor" who missed out on podiums prior to this season.

young at the time, too. So (Bobsleigh Canada officials) took me aside and put me in skeleton."

Canadian coach Duff Gibson said Reid's results have improved dramatically this season, as shown by her first World Cup gold and silver medals, but she is not doing much differently. One key difference is that she is relaxing her back and neck muscles to absorb the ice better as she slides.

"That's a very subtle difference," he said. "But it has an effect on her aerodynamics."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

One more year

Pettitte re-signs with New York

Andy Pettitte needed little time to decide that he wanted to return for another season with the New York Yankees

The arm felt strong. His family was on board for at least one more year and he felt there was a real chance of adding another World Series title to his collection.

With nothing to hold him back, the lefty agreed to a one-year deal with the Yankees worth \$12 million on Wednesday, putting baseball's biggest post-season winner back in pinstripes.

The five-time World Series champion turns 41 in June. He retired after the 2010 season to spend more time at home but then decided to come back this year — while working as an instructor during spring training. Pettitte went 5-4 with a 2.87 ERA in 12 starts. He missed almost three months because of a broken lower left leg, sustained when he was hit by a line drive off the bat of Cleveland's Casey Kotchman on June 27. Pettitte's signing was the Yankees' second move to solidify their rotation in about a week. New York gave Hiroki Kuroda a \$15-million, one-year contract to return. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Putt it away. Golf officials propose a ban on the popular long-putter shot

Brace yourself — just not your putter.

In a proposal that would affect major champions as well as amateurs at their local clubs, the guardians of the 600-year-old sport want to write a new rule that would outlaw a putting stroke they fear is taking too much skill out of the game.

The U.S. Golf Association and the Royal & Ancient Golf Club said Wednesday they are not banning the belly putter or the longer "broom-handle" putters — only the way they are used. The proposed rule would prohibit golfers at all levels from anchoring a club against their bodies while making a stroke.

The rule would not take effect until 2016.

"We believe a player should hold the club away from his body and swing it freely," USGA executive director Mike Davis said. "Golf is a game of skill and challenge, and we think that's an important part of it."

What concerned the governing bodies, however, was an increasing number of players who were turning to the long putters because they saw it as an advantage, not as a last resort to cure their putting woes.



Ernie Els reacts to a putt during the British Open in July.

JON SUPER/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

"Anchored strokes have very rapidly become the preferred option for a growing number of players, and this has caused us to review these strokes and their impact on the game," R&A chief executive Peter Dawson said. "Our conclusion is that anchored strokes threaten to supplant traditional strokes, which with all their frailties are integral to the longstanding character of our sport."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Both sides have valid claims in NHL negotiations: Expert

Lockout. League and players will meet separately with mediators again on Thursday

It's a good thing U.S. federal mediators aren't seeking to determine right and wrong while meeting with the NHL and NHL Players' Association this week.

According to sports management professor Aubrey Kent of

Temple University in Philadelphia, both sides have a valid reason to claim that they are in the right when it comes to their ongoing labour dispute.

"For me, the whole issue comes down to perspective," Kent said Wednesday in an interview. "Players feel as though they're being bullied and strong-armed and having things taken away — I can see that that's a legitimate perspective. Owners feel from a dollar-value perspective that the next seven years they've offered would be far more lucrative

than the previous seven years were, even as good as that was.

"And if you crunch the numbers, that's actually true as well."

No wonder the sides remain so entrenched in their positions.

They met separately with mediators Scot L. Beckenbaugh and John Sweeney on Wednesday afternoon at an undisclosed location — something Kent didn't anticipate would result in a "seismic" shift in perspective from either side. The non-binding sessions are intended

to try and help the sides find some common ground, and will continue Thursday.

The last move at the bargaining table came from the NHLPA, which presented a new offer last week that moved within \$182 million of the league over a five-year deal. Commissioner Gary Bettman said they remained "far apart."

The work stoppage comes at a time when NHL franchise values have never been higher, with the annual Forbes rankings released Wednesday valuing 20 of the league's 30 teams

at \$200 million or higher.

"Both sides feel they can get a better deal by waiting it out, but my view is that time only helps owners in these negotiations," Kent said. "And it's not just in this particular negotiation, but in any labour dispute. Employees are always at a disadvantage because salary lost is never regained."

"Whereas owners were there before the players and they'll be there after the players and they have plenty of time to make up anything that is lost."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

NHL

Forbes says Leafs worth \$1 billion

While the Toronto Maple Leafs became the first hockey team to be valued at \$1 billion US by Forbes.com, the influential magazine concluded the fabled franchise got the "worst" value for the buck and said the NHL would be better off with increased revenue sharing.

The jump in value of the Maple Leafs — to \$1 billion from the magazine's estimate of \$521 million last year — is based in large part on the sale of 75 per cent of the team to telecom giants Rogers Communications and BCE Inc.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE



Canadian skier ready to launch assault on slopes

Larisa Yurkiw of Owen Sound, Ont., prepares to blast out of the starting gate during a women's downhill training run at the Lake Louise Winterstart World Cup on Wednesday in Alberta. Yurkiw, competing at the Lake Louise World Cup for the first time since 2009, travelled a long road back from a catastrophic knee injury to be Canada's lone woman racing World Cup downhill this week. JONATHAN HAYWARD/THE CANADIAN PRESS

NHL. Glendale vote paves way for Coyotes sale

The Phoenix Coyotes have taken a major step toward securing an owner.

All that's left is one last hurdle.

Glendale's city council voted late Tuesday night in favour of a reworked, \$320-million arena management deal with Greg Jamison, clearing the way for the former San Jose Sharks CEO to complete his purchase of the team.

"The affirmative vote by the Glendale city council is an important step toward the realization of a positive ownership resolution for the Coyotes and their fans," NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly said in a

statement Wednesday.

The city council approved a 20-year, \$324-million deal for Jobing.com Arena in June, but, faced with growing financial constraints, city leaders sought to renegotiate the deal. The council voted 4-2 in favour of the new deal, which cuts back Glendale's payments in the first five years, gives Jamison incentives to bring in more non-hockey events and issues penalties if there is an NHL lockout.

The new arena deal requires Jamison to complete his purchase of the team from the NHL by Jan. 21, 2013, a deadline he was confident would be met.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Curling. Saskatoon's Lawton off to a hot start

Stefanie Lawton is off to an impressive start at the Capital One Canada Cup curling competition.

The Saskatoon skip won her second game of the day in Moose Jaw, Sask., defeating Heather Nedohin of Sherwood Park, Alta., 8-5 in Draw 2 action Wednesday.

Earlier, Lawton downed Sherry Middaugh of Coldwater, Ont., 10-4.

The two wins give Lawton a good start on her quest for an Olympic berth in Sochi in 2014. The winner of both the men's and women's tournaments in Moose Jaw will receive one of the six automatic qualification

Men's action

- Edmonton's Kevin Koe (1-0) beat John Epping of Peterborough, 5-3.

- That brought Epping's young rink back down to earth after they scored a 7-6 win over Olympic champion Kevin Martin in the first draw.

spots for the 2013 Roar of the Rings — the tournament that will determine who advances to the 2014 Winter Games in Sochi. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Raptors' season gets uglier versus Grizzlies

Marreese Speights had 18 points and 12 rebounds to help the Memphis Grizzlies to their third straight win, a 103-82 victory over the Toronto Raptors on Wednesday night.

Marc Gasol and Zach Randolph finished with 17 points apiece, Randolph adding 13 rebounds and six assists. Mike Conley had 16 points, going 4 of 5 on three-pointers, and Rudy Gay added 14 as Memphis maintained the best record in the NBA (11-2).

DeMar DeRozan led the Raptors with 16 points, while Kyle Lowry and Jose Calderon scored 12 apiece. Linas Kleiza added 11 points, but was 5 of 15 from the field, as Toronto lost its sixth straight.

The Raptors played without Andrea Bargnani, their second-leading scorer, who sat out after hurting his left ankle in Tuesday night's loss at Houston.

Memphis dominated the points in the paint 46-32 and held a 46-33 advantage on the boards, including 12-7 off the

Wednesday's game

103 82

Grizzlies

Raptors

offensive glass, leading to 16 second-chance points.

The Grizzlies led 48-47 at the break in a half that saw 14 lead changes and six ties. The Grizzlies had an early nine-point lead, but from there it was closely played.

Conley had 10 points for Memphis, going 3 of 4 from outside the arc.

Kleiza already had 11 points for Toronto, but it took him 13 shots to connect on five. He was taking the bulk of the shots as DeRozan and Lowry, Toronto's two leading scorers with Bargnani out, combined for only four of seven shots in the first half. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



Raptors guard Jose Calderon, left, is guarded by the Grizzlies' Mike Conley on Wednesday in Memphis, Tenn. DANNY JOHNSTON/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Horoscopes

Aries

March 21 - April 20

If you know a secret about a friend, you are strongly advised to keep it to yourself. Don't embarrass them by letting other people in on information they don't need to be aware of. You have secrets too!

Taurus

April 21 - May 21

You won't find it hard to win people round to your way of thinking. With your ruler, Venus, linked nicely to energy planet Mars others want to believe every word you say. Whether or not it's true is another matter.

Gemini

May 22 - June 21

Forget about your chores and responsibilities and do something strictly for fun. This is not a day to push yourself hard. This is a day to take things easy. Time spent in the company of friends will not be time wasted.

Cancer

June 22 - July 23

Today should be a fun day for you, followed by a fabulous Friday and a stunning Saturday. Romance is under good stars right now, so let a special person know just how much you think of them.

Leo

July 24 - Aug. 23

You will find it easier than usual to deal with family issues today, so make a point of trying to resolve disagreements with loved ones. It must not be all one-way traffic. It's not about blame, it's about helping each other.

Virgo

Aug. 24 - Sept. 23

Relaxation and affection are the keywords today. That applies not only to your dealings with loved ones but also to those you work with. Your laid back attitude will draw people to you.

Libra

Sept. 24 - Oct. 23

Listen to what others tell you and act on their advice. You may wonder why they are so eager to help you but the planets indicate there is no need to be suspicious. They just want to see you do well.

Scorpio

Oct. 24 - Nov. 22

Cosmic changes over the next few days will bring challenges of a serious nature, but that does not mean you can't have fun as well. Today's Venus-Mars link will bring out your playful side — and maybe your romantic side too.

Sagittarius

Nov. 23 - Dec. 21

Don't let money worries get in the way of taking a personal relationship to a new level. You don't have to spend a fortune to have fun with the object of your affection, just do things together that you both enjoy.

Capricorn

Dec. 22 - Jan. 20

Make sure you get out and about, and interact with wide a range of people today. The more you are on the move, the more likely it is you will meet someone with whom you can make beautiful music.

Aquarius

Jan. 21 - Feb. 19

Watch out for opportunities to boost your reputation today. Venus in the career area of your chart, linked to go-getting Mars, will open doors to you that may have been closed before. Or maybe you never knew they existed!

Pisces

Feb. 20 - March 20

Your sparkling personality will draw people to you like moths to a flame today. Wherever you go, others will want to be your friend, and you'll have more than enough warmth to go around. **SALLY BROMPTON**

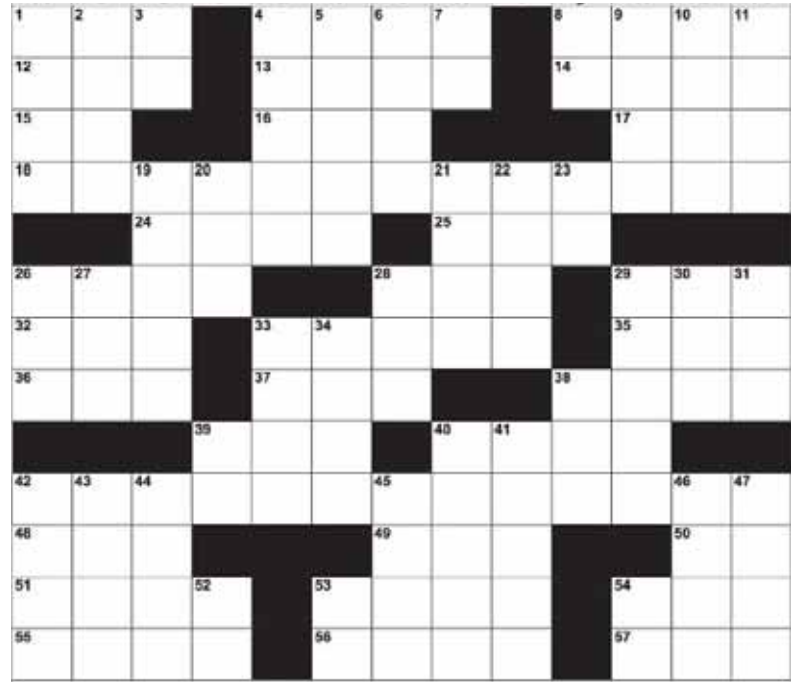
Crossword

Across

1. Pot cover
4. Heard on Perry Mason
8. Wing reach
12. Electrified particle
13. Inspired
14. Tedious office job
15. Movie alien
16. Cheers was one
17. Orange Pekoe or Earl Grey
18. Buffy the — (2 words)
24. First class (2 words)
25. Carol Burnett tugged this
26. Bundle
28. Barn layer
29. Precious jewel
32. Food scrap
33. Easel board
35. — Speedwagon
36. Mornings (abbr.)
37. Exclamations of contentment
38. He played the Skipper on Gilligan's Island
39. Scrape out a living
40. Slime
42. Set a programme to music
48. Sales agent (abbr.)
49. Hard knock
50. Egyptian Sun God
51. Extremely dry
53. Found in an atlas
54. " — Cup"
55. Greet
56. Pochard
57. Wheel of Fortune purchase

Down

1. Actor Schreiber
2. Small amount
3. He starred in "The Pink Panther" movies (init.)
4. Log home
5. Alert
6. Withered
7. Asner or Norton



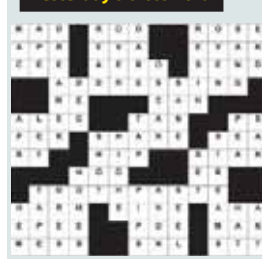
BY BETTY MARTIN

8. Nora on Brothers & Sisters (init.)
9. Feel sorry for
10. Aweather
11. Close by
19. Soda fountain treats
20. "The Raven" poet
21. As — on TV
22. Acreage
23. State where Evening Shade was set (abbr.)
26. Fancy scarf

27. Upper limb
28. This Hour — 22 Minutes
29. Diagram
30. Slippery fish
31. One of The Three Stooges
33. Japanese wine
34. Only Cosby son the The Cosby Show
38. Jump
39. Hospital waiting room (abbr.)
40. Green or purple fruit

41. Slip up
42. Study hard for a test
43. — Come the Brides
44. Early Ron Howard role
45. Metric weight
46. Moran of Happy Days
47. Giant powerful dog: Great —
52. The star of The Apprentice (init.)
53. Form of address
54. British thanks

Yesterday's Crossword



What's online

See today's answers at metronews.ca/answers.



Sudoku

How to play

Fill in the grid, so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved. You solve the puzzle with reasoning and logic.

Yesterday's Sudoku

5	1	7	6	3	2	4	9	8
4	6	9	1	8	5	2	7	3
2	8	3	9	7	4	1	6	5
8	4	2	3	1	6	9	5	7
1	7	5	2	9	6	8	3	4
3	9	6	5	4	7	8	1	2
7	2	1	8	5	9	3	4	6
6	3	4	7	2	1	5	8	9
9	5	8	4	6	3	7	2	1

		3	2			5	7
4	3			5	9		1
4				3		9	
1	2				6	7	
5		8				1	
9			1	6			4
1	8			3	5		

Today

10°/9°

Rain

90%

Friday

10°/8°

Rain

70%

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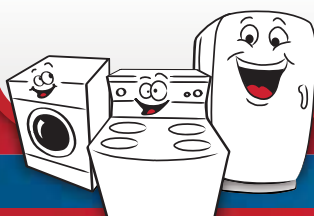
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